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which went on, so that she might recount it to her father. The women of the village walked "softly" with this older daughter. "Daughter of the G'aman," they called her when they addressed her, and her mildly spoken, persuasive suggestions were never ignored.

Wilhelmina, however, busied herself at her work, and if anything were asked of her, she would look up with an expression of bewilderment. Differing from other women of the village, who had come to live there after marriage and knew the speech of the less aristocratic down-river settlements, Wilhelmina had never been any distance from Asindopo Lantiwe. The other women were, therefore, constantly interpreting the questions which were being put to her.

She was dark of skin, as dark as her sister, but her face had a flush of red in it, as though she had brushed it with the sacred red kuswe. A little above her wrists gleamed wide bands of tin. These were bracelets her husband had made for her, and they were much prized. The brass coils which she once wore had been filed through and removed, for when the ankles of a woman who bore children swelled, it became necessary to be rid of these ornaments.

In a small mortar, decorated with carvings, she was pounding maripa nuts. The ends of the pestle were bordered with finely cut cross hatchings.

"Ai, we use much palm oil here," she said.

Her mother was paring cassava. At her feet were several baskets and pieces of bark, shaped like miniature canoes, into which she threw the peeled cassava. Near these containers lay a sifter, woven of palm fiber, and a grater, made of a thin board perhaps sixteen inches long and half as wide, into which long slender nails had been hammered and their points filed to a needle-like sharpness. When the tubers were peeled, Wilhelmina began the grating, first squatting down, then dropping to her knees, better to work. The grated cassava was then packed into the matapi, the cassava press which had before leaned against the house. This matapi was of a basket-like weave, golden in color

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yet his findings might in time serve the enemy. We were soldiers bringing toys, as the image of the krutu had suggested. 123

Since life in the bush, for strangers like ourselves, was lived in terms of days, and each day was taken for what it might bring, we were grateful to those gods who had spoken for us, and watched the effect of the ancestral edict.

Before dawn of the day which followed the ceremony of asking the will of the ancestors, men came to counsel with the Granman, and from then onward many men were about the village. The young boys found their toy guns again, and the little girls played on the river bank. The widow who was so susceptible to evil influences no longer appeared in the central clearing with her child on her back, stamping her rice, or drying her peanuts. Her door was shut. Fenekonde was no longer about, for she had gone to the menstrual house, and Tenemi who came to sweep the council house each morning now wore a new obia on a long, twisted, white cord, hung from shoulder to side. She was polite, formal, and she worked fast.

Late that afternoon the obia man who had appeared at the first council meeting with wide stripes of clay came again, and his wife accompanied him. They were the best diviners on the river. From the corner of the council house the large mat which had been standing rolled up was carried into a closed hut, so that he might sit on it, and perform his magic to see what the future held for the destiny of the Saramacca people, and what immediate threat the white man's coming boded. Before leaving for the hut where the mat was prepared the man and woman sat with us in the council house in the company of the Granman. They apparently needed to know our individual names for their task. While we sat there, the white woman absently began to play with the obia about her neck, and this seemed a signal for the other woman to take hers into her hands and begin to mutter an invocation, for the stranger's careless playing appeared to her as the white man's way of casting a spell. 123 991 989 [265]

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sufficient time for the nitrogenous substances to be reduced to fertilizing material. Because of this poverty of the ground and the constant foraging of insect and bird pests—the parrot is notorious among these—the cultivation of food is difficult and laborious for the Bush Negroes and the provision ground must often be moved to a fresh site.

Their main carbohydrate staple is the manioc or bitter cassava. It is a tuber-like plant that grows some three to seven feet in height, the edible portion being the underground root. The root contains the poisonous prussic acid, which must be carefully removed. Bush Negroes have been known to commit suicide by drinking the juice of the cassava. The plant itself resembles the tobacco plant, but has a stalk covered with bark and large roots that look like sweet potatoes.

The roots are harvested, carefully peeled, and reduced to a pulp by being rubbed on the roughened surface of an inclined board, the expelled free juices rolling down the incline into a bowl. The rest of the plant is thrown away. The pulp is stuffed into a cylindrical squeezing contrivance made of reed, known as the *matapee*. It resembles one of those toy finger grippers of straw that children play with. The reeds being flexible, elongating the tube by pulling at the ends reduces the diameter of it; this compresses the contents of the cylinder and squeezes out the deadly juice which then runs off into a bowl below. The matapee is a beautifully woven piece of basketry about five feet long and seven inches in diameter. The upper end is attached to the limb of a tree and a heavy stone is suspended from the lower end, the

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weight of which elongates the tube. In place of a stone, a stick may be passed through the lower end. The Bush Negro straddles it, working the apparatus with his own weight.

The pulp, when dried and heated, becomes a nourishing flour ready for use. There are two ways of serving it. One way is to make it into large, circular pancakes, high piles or stacks of which were carried in our corials to constitute the chief diet of the paddlers on the river trip. When they feel a pang of hunger they break off a piece of cassava from one of the large pancakes, dip it into the river to soften it, and eat it without further preparation. The other way of preparing cassava is to stew it with fish or meat. On tasting this food we found it a bland, mealy cake of not unpleasant taste. The entire technic of preparing it is borrowed from the indigenous Indians; "matapee" is an Indian word.

In a number of Bush Negro villages can be found the common Indian corn. The Negroes allow it to mature and then roast it until it is as hard as a rock, after which they shell off the grains and eat them. If the white man asks for green corn, they refuse to give it to him, saying it is unfit to eat.

Another staple of their diet is rice, or *aleisee*. Rice of the upland variety can be planted in a dry soil and flourishes like wheat or oats. When harvested, it is tied in small bundles, about a foot in diameter, and threshed. The Negroes put it in a wooden mortar made of a hollow tree trunk, and three Djuka boys stand around it with pounders, striking alternately, like three railway labourers driving one spike. Rice, especially when ripening, is attacked by birds, partic-

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African comb, from the region of Nigeria, is shown on page 175. It can be seen that the wooden comb is not a Djuka invention, as every characteristic of the Bush Negro pieces can be found on this West African piece, except the ornamental piercing. 412 322 [177]

The arts of weaving and basketry are not as highly developed among the Djukas as is the carving of wooden implements. The Bush Negroes do not weave the cotton cloth they wear. It is obtained, instead, by trading at the white settlements. The only weaving among them consists of cotton leg and arm bands—things that do not count for much so far as industry is concerned, but which expand the wearer's ego and add enormously to his or her self-esteem. The basketry of the Djukas, like the weaving, is simple and competent. Unornamented circular baskets, varying in size from a foot to a yard in diameter, can be seen in all the villages. They are used for carrying yams, rice, and foodstuffs generally. The finest basket work does not occur in these baskets, however, but in the cassava squeezers, those elongated tubes for producing cassava flour. These are beautifully woven of uniform rattan, and decorated with darker strips to form a simple pattern near each end. The finished product is an admirable piece of work, of which the owner must indeed be proud. 214 [205] 215 415

Pottery is made by the Djukas for utilitarian purposes only, and the solid black, absolutely undecorated clay ware has no particular element of beauty. The pots are black, stolid, and unimaginative. They are simply necessities. 323

But when the necessities of life have been provided for,